

Special Lectures by Prof. Mastanduno and Dr. Lee

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In June, 2008, the Pew Research Center released an interesting comparative poll on how much people of the 24 countries including the U. S. are interested in U. S. Presidential Election this year. Eighty percent of the Americans responded that they were very much or somewhat interested in their election. Surprisingly, eighty three percent of the Japanese said they are very much or somewhat interested in American Presidential Election. Other than the U. S. and Japan, Germany stood at the distant third at fifty six percent (see <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/260.pdf>).

Today, we saw the accuracy of the Center's report verified. The huge auditorium on the campus of Nanzan University was just packed. We got just so many questions. It was a very enthusiastic audience.

Needless to say, it was the presentations by the two distinguished panelists that brought about the excited reaction of the floor.

First, Michael Mastanduno talked about the future direction of the American foreign policy from the perspective of whether we could see a multilateral foreign policy coming back in the U. S. in the McCain or Obama Administration. In fact, his answer was basically "no." His presentation was a kind of warning to naïve thinking or expectation within and outside the U. S. that somehow we will see a more internationalist foreign policy only if the Bush Administration is thrown out. It is true that there exists a huge expectation particularly for the Obama Administration to launch a more multilateral foreign policy. It is against this backdrop that Mastanduno systematically, theoretically, and historically proved that there is a serious limits to the extent that the U. S. foreign policy could be internationalist. Even in the heyday of the American internationalism after the Second World War, its foreign policy was fairly unilateralist. Given the extremely polarized and competitive partisan politics, it will not be very international in a stable manner.

Second, Jennifer Lee talked under the title, "A Post-Racial America?" Referring to Barack Obama frequently, she pointed out that Obama's message resonated with many Americans strongly because of who he is as an individual. She also mentioned "one-drop rule of hypodescent" which labeled all Americans with any trace of black ancestry as black, by which she put the Obama candidacy into perspective. He was criticized by some, especially by Afro-American leaders, including conservatives such as Alan Keyes, as being not black enough.

He is, however, black enough by the one-drop rule. By his own account, he is black because he has been often bypassed by cab drivers when trying to hail a cab. Lee stressed that what makes Obama so appealing to Americans of all racial and ethnic background is that he tapped into the hopes and ideals embodied in the American Dream that anything is possible.

There was a question posed by the moderator as to whether Dr. Lee thinks we will see many Obamas from now on. Her view is that the rise of Obama to a presidential candidate of a major political party is not attributed to the general rise of the status of African-Americans, and that unfortunately, he will not be followed by other African-Americans very soon.

The moderator spoke for a few minutes to give the general audience some background knowledge and context on this year's presidential campaign and asked the panelists a few questions. Two presentations were followed by an active question and answer session with substance.